



Helping People Help Themselves

November 4 - November 17, 2011

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SPARE CHANGE

NEWS

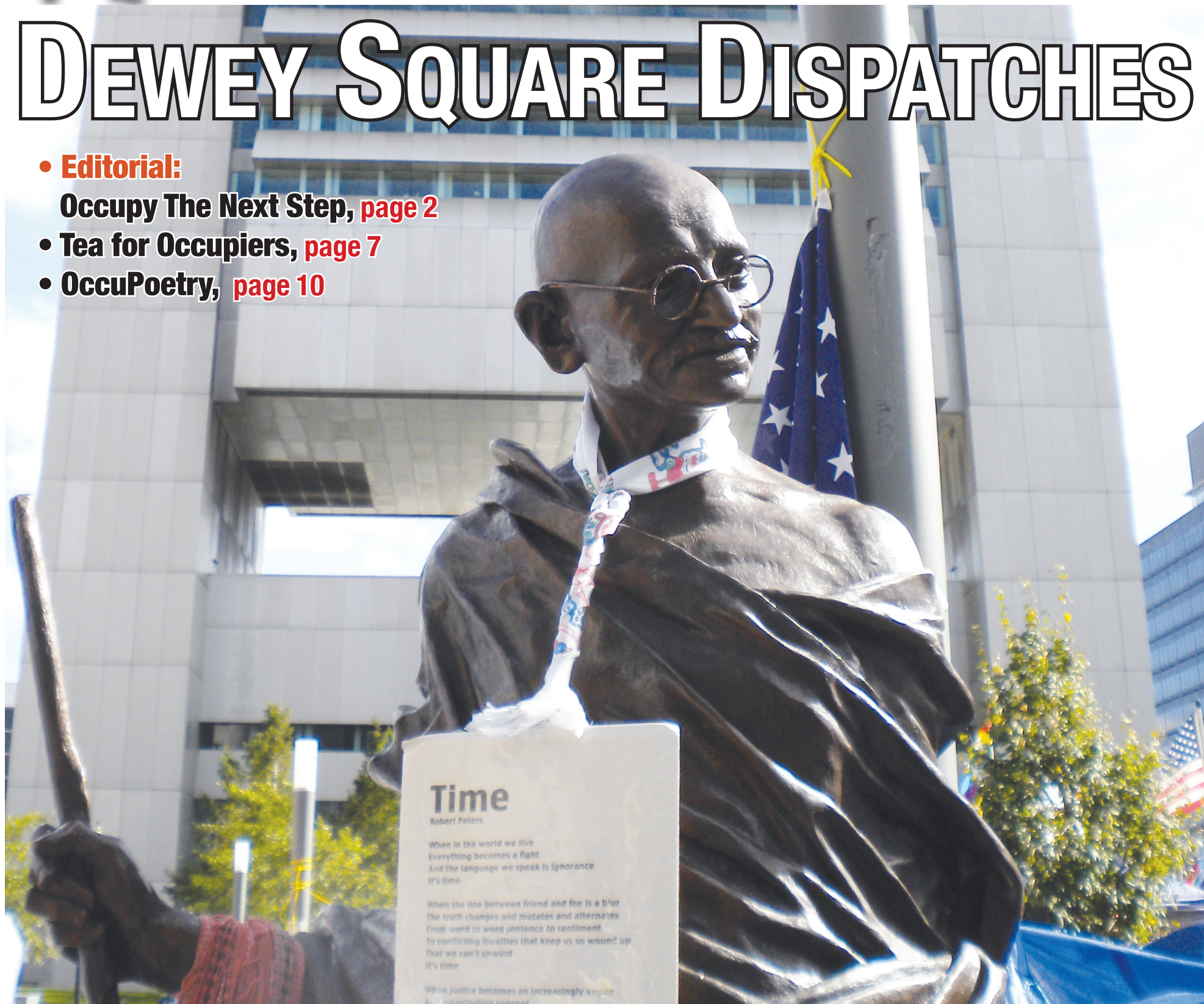
DEWEY SQUARE DISPATCHES

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Time

Robert Peters

When in the world we live
Everything becomes a fight
And the language we speak is ignorance
It's time

When the line between friend and foe is a blur
The truth changes and mutates and alternates
From word to word sentence to sentiment
To conflicting loyalties that keep us so wound up
That we can't unwind
It's time

When justice becomes an increasingly vague
A distant dream

PHOTO: TRISHA CRAIG



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Spare Change News

is published by the HOMELESS EMPOWERMENT PROJECT (HEP)

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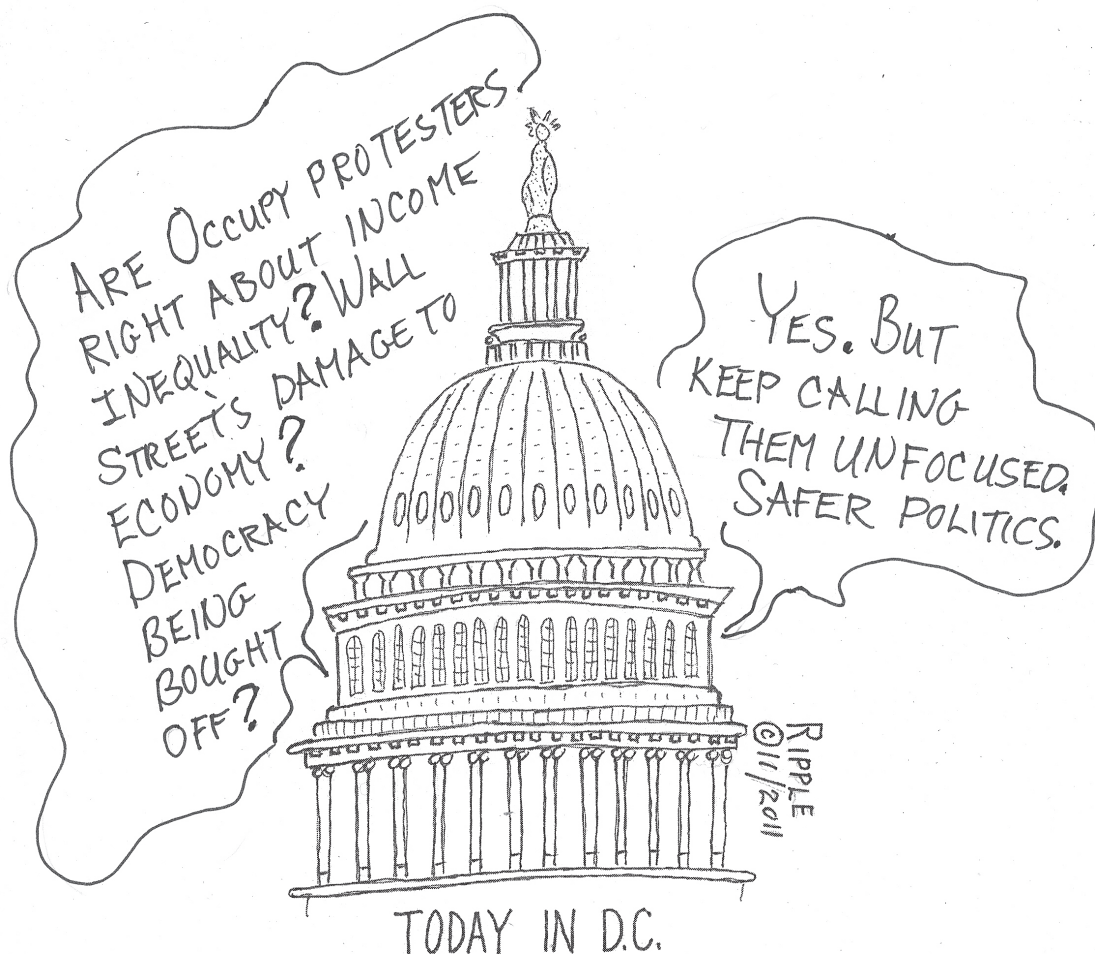
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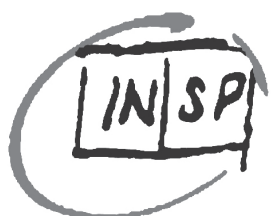
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Editorial: Occupy The Next Step



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**North
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Association**

Vision & Mission

Spare Change News was founded in 1992 by a group of homeless people and a member of Boston Jobs with Peace. *Spare Change* is published by the nonprofit organization The Homeless Empowerment Project (HEP).

SPARE CHANGE'S GOAL:

"To present, by our own example, that homeless and economically disadvantaged people, with the proper resources, empowerment, opportunity, and encouragement are capable of creating change for ourselves in society."

HEP'S OBJECTIVES:

To empower the economically disadvantaged in Greater Boston through self-employment, skill development and self-expression. To create forums, including those of independent media in order to reshape public perception of poverty and homelessness.



Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick visits the Occupy Boston encampment in Boston on October 15, 2011.

A hand-made sign at the Occupy Boston encampment in Dewey Square asks: "Cardinal O'Malley, Where Are You?"

The same might be asked of our leaders on Beacon Hill and Capitol Hill, whose timidity has so far led them to keep a safe distance between their carefully manicured political images and the grungy, Woodstock-era look of Occupy Boston, which embraces a populism, spontaneity and political theater they likely fear will not play well with middle America.

But those same elected representatives cannot afford to be indifferent about the movement's message, which very much has to do with the eco-

nomie concerns and anxieties of average voters.

The Occupy movement is remarkable by many measures, including the racial and social diversity of its open and expanding membership, and prompts obvious comparisons to the Tea Party movement that has dominated American political discourse in variously loud, simplistic and misleading ways.

The long list of injustices wrought by a government beholden to corporate and special interests. The ever-increasing inequality gap between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have nots. Growing unemployment, poverty and economic

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Editorial: Marjorie Decker, A Record of Helping Others

Last spring, the Homeless Empowerment Project held a silent auction to raise money for *Spare Change News*. We had invited Cambridge City Councilor Marjorie Decker as our speaker for the evening, but we were still looking for someone to auction off a few valuable lots. Marjorie came through for us, as a speaker, MC and auctioneer. She entertained us all and got top dollar for the auction items with her enthusiasm and easy rapport with those in attendance.

Marjorie grew up in public housing in Cambridgeport, and she's motivated

by a sense of social and economic justice strongly influenced by her upbringing. Her mother worked with the elderly, and now works with homeless families and helps substance abusers find detox programs. Marjorie was the first in her family to graduate from high school, Cambridge Rindge and Latin, and she went on to earn Bachelor and Masters degrees.

After college, Marjorie taught first grade and special education for Teach For America in Shreveport, Louisiana. Returning home to Cambridge, she worked in state and local government,

and then led the Equal Justice Coalition, a statewide advocacy program for civil legal aid for low-income people.

Marjorie served on the board of the Cambridge Anti-Poverty Agency (CEOC) just before winning a Cambridge City Council seat. The Boston YWCA has recognized Marjorie for her work on affordable housing and her advocacy for racial and economic justice. Marjorie is now in her sixth term on the Cambridge City Council and running for re-election. The *Spare Change News* community wishes her many more years of service to Cambridge and Massachusetts.



Letter: Smokers Have No Say and No Political Power

To the Editor:

While I wish James Shearer was correct when he wrote that Boston had decided not to prohibit smoking in public housing, such is not the case (James Shearer, "Observations," Oct. 21-Nov. 3). The Boston Housing Authority is, in fact, currently notifying its 25,000 public housing residents that as of next September, they will be forbidden to smoke in their apartments and violators will be evicted.

This no-smoking policy was prompted by Obama appointee, Sean Donovan, secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, having sent a memo to public housing authorities nationwide "strongly encouraging" them to prohibit smoking. The BHA is also encouraging residents who sus-

pect a neighbor of smoking to report the infraction to authorities.

Although the majority of tenants, who spoke at public hearings the BHA held last year, expressed anger that the authority was forbidding them to set the smoking policy in their own homes, officials celebrated the measure as a way of "incentivizing" smokers to quit. Interestingly, most of the tenants who expressed opposition were non-smokers.

Residents also voiced concern that women going out to smoke at night in high crime areas would be in danger of assault or rape. Officials dismissed such a danger as inconsequential compared to the effect the ban would have on reducing smoking rates. Officials also say they want to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke drifting from other apart-

ments, but there is little evidence such slight exposure poses any risk, especially compared to the problems of mold, pest droppings, and chemical contamination which have plagued Boston public housing for decades.

In order to pressure private landlords to ban smoking, the Boston Public Health Commission is using federal stimulus money to reward those landlords who do, and is giving them free advertising on a health commission website. Health officials are also running frightening TV ads, again using federal money, depicting tobacco smoke sinisterly seeping in from a neighbor's apartment and enveloping a sleeping infant.

City councilors in both Boston and Cambridge, have proposed banning smoking in public parks. As always the justification is to protect people from sec-

ondhand smoke, but in reality it is part of the overall program to alienate and ostracize smokers.

Government and private reformers, in their effort to achieve a society where tobacco is outlawed and smokers are designated criminals, see no tactic as too coercive or intrusive. Reformers use the power and money of federal and state government, as well as that of wealthy organizations like the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, to promote housing, workplace, and social discrimination against those 20 percent of American adults who smoke, the majority of whom are poor or lower middle-class and have little political power.

Stephen Helfer
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insecurity. The class warfare being waged in our political discourse. These are among the reasons so many are camping out in tents in Boston and so many other cities around the world.

Give the Occupy movement credit for helping to steer American political discourse back toward the middle. For too long, angry voices on the right have been setting an agenda that seeks to rip the social safety net into tatters while it props up tax cuts for the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans, corporate personhood and financial elitism.

The challenge for the left is that the Tea Party took an immediate interest in political empowerment, helping to elect people like Scott Brown as the miscast and unjust replacement

for liberal lion Teddy Kennedy, and encouraging the kind of social divisiveness that demonizes the afflicted and comforts the comfortable.

Compared to the agenda-driven Tea Party, the Occupy movement so far has no political program, no clear political aspirations. There is no modern-day equivalent of a Port Huron statement, no Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. No interest in engaging in the electoral process, no agenda for affecting public policy or electing effective leaders.

Nor is there the equivalent of right-wing politicians pandering to the Tea Party faithful and leveraging that movement for political gain.

Kudos: Credit to Gov. Deval Patrick for strolling over to Dewey Square at one point without his handlers in tow

to see the Occupy encampment for himself. That was brave compared to other Democratic leaders who have stayed away and kept silent about a remarkably organized, articulate and growing political force to be reckoned with. With the "Make Out Not War" signs and anti-Wall Street rhetoric, the Occupy backdrop may seem an inconvenient photo-op to the John Kerry-style status quo Democrats, who prefer the safe and the predictable.

But however unappealing the images of disheveled tent dwellers camping out across from the Federal Reserve building, the Occupy demonstrators have a message that matters to and resonates with average, working-class Americans. That message needs to be heard and picked up and carried into the political arena by those who aspire to be our leaders.

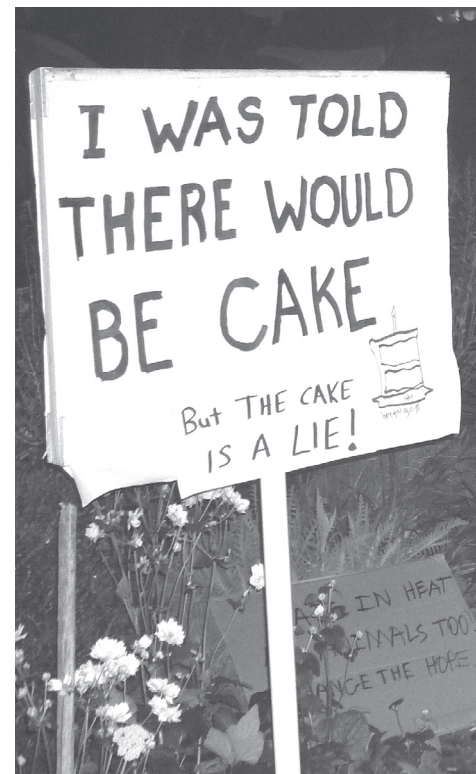


PHOTO / ADAM SENNOTT

Phillips Brooks House Volunteers Work for Intangible Rewards

Julie Monrad
Spare Change News

When students enter college they often have the mindset that life is full of possibilities, especially in reference to saving the great big world. They have a fresh start and a future ahead of them, as well as four years to grow into who they wish to be for the rest of their lives. With an abundance of knowledge behind them and an unlimited amount ahead, the world is their oyster, all those wonderful graduation speeches ringing in their ears.

Then the daily routine begins. In a life of waking up, rushing to get dressed, running to daily commitments, making time for friends and family, indulging in a little “you” time, eating at some point, working out, showering (preferably), finishing any work from the day and somehow making it to bed at a reasonable time, it seems overwhelming to merely consider devoting another hour or two of a precious 24 to figuring out how to save the world. How can anyone even momentarily ponder how to feed all the hungry and heal all illnesses when just finishing economics homework seems impossible?

Think again about that economics class. Didn't it teach you that the “invisible hand” was the best way for the world to function anyways? If everyone works toward whatever benefits them, the world markets - and therefore the world - will turn unhindered. So why muck up the natural state of affairs by spending your limited time helping others?

At that moment, at 1:16 AM when a student sits, elbows propped on a desk, head in hands, brow furrowed, desperately trying to finish their economics problem set for their 9 AM section, the student wonders, for what reason are they so dedicated to this class? Only to realize, it in fact is not dedication but motivation driving them. They are motivated by the looming semester end grade.

Dedication is something beyond the obvious reward of marks or pay. Dedication means giving oneself to a project or belief because of your passion. It is a concept to which 1,400 students at Harvard subscribe.

Regardless of their heavy workloads, art projects, newspaper articles to write, sports schedules and everything else, they dedicate hours of their week to the Phillips Brooks House Association (PBHA), Harvard's community service organization.

If so busy, if so pressed for time, for what reason do these college students give up hours of their week to a pro-

gram without concrete rewards? The only answer to such illogical decisions must be as abstract as the rewards: it is the human element.

Examine the numbers: 1,400 Harvard students volunteer for 86 community service organizations. Twenty student officers give vast chunks of their week to organizing PBHA as a broad organization needing all the accoutrements such as fundraising, book keeping, weekly meetings, publicity and, of course, workers. Each PBHA program also requires one or two people to organize volunteers and co-workers. Not to forget the 12 summer programs that are, as the student officer Diana Barnstein said, “all student run.” All this energy goes to help 10,000 people in the greater Boston area.

To keep all 86 programs and 1,400 volunteers straight, PBHA breaks itself down into six subcategories: mentoring programs, advocacy, organizing, housing and health programs, after-school and interschool programs, adult services programs, summer urban programs (SUP) and other summer programs.

Student officers Carolyn Chou and Nadia Farjood oversee the after-school and mentoring programs, respectively. Both programs focus on helping children in the Boston area develop some aspect of themselves beyond the school curriculum. As PBHA's president and Keyatch Afterschool Program volunteer Ekene Obi-Okoye said, “For the youth that I work with it's a lot about empowerment, to know that they can do what anyone else can do. They don't have to listen to anyone tell them they can't.” Obi-Okoye went on to describe the support system they create for young children in the various programs, one in which students learn how to try, maybe even fail, and yet have the reassurance that someone is in fact there for them. Programs such as Leaders! mentors children to grow in confidence while programs such as the Franklin Afterschool Enrichment Program (FASE) tutor children in their academics.

During the summer months, with 12 summer programs on three different sites and an average of two volunteers per group of eight children, the focus on Boston's children only grows. The camps run for seven weeks and include not only Harvard volunteers as counselors, but also former campers now old enough to act as Junior Counselors.

During the school-year months, programs under the Adult Services and Advocacy, Organizing, Housing and Health Programs lend a hand to Boston's adult community. Pets as Therapy visits



Harvard students volunteering with the Chinatown Big Siblings program.

the elderly in the hopes of raising their spirits while others, such as the Youth Prison Tutoring Program, help rising adults in the community find their place. As for those in between, PBHA volunteers build homes with Habitat for Humanity, partake in legal transactions and even run their very own homeless shelter from November into April. The Harvard Square Homeless Shelter truly exhibits the student community's desire to make a difference, whether in the early preparation stages in the fall months or during the night shift of the winter months, as they struggle to find extra cots in the hopes of admitting one or two more people into the refuge of University Lutheran Church.

To run all of these various programs, PBHA requires generous monetary donations and people's time and effort to keep community service projects, especially the summer programs, affordable for the targeted communities. Besides writing letters asking for

donations, PBHA volunteers plan annual plant sales and bike sales. “It's been fun,” said fundraising officer Winshen Liu, “and I think what's frustrating is the money's a very small percentage of PBHA's budget. Three thousand dollars and a budget of I don't know how many hundreds of thousands is nothing. It's better than nothing, but that has been a little difficult.”

To help fill in this financial gap, PBHA also holds an annual auction at The Queen's Head, Harvard's student pub. Mostly though, PBHA subsists off grants and personal donations.

Accounting for those who donate to PBHA, the number of people dedicated to community service far exceeds 1,400. More importantly, the demographic extends beyond that of the ever bushy-tailed, bright-eyed, hopeful college student still figuring out how to save the world. It involves the adults of the Boston community, those who have

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Fight Addiction Your Own Way

Aaron James
Spare Change News



Fourteen months since a lick of alcohol has touched my lips! There have been many close calls. I have actually opened a can, only to end up flushing it down a thirsty toilet. I have had many nights of hell bringing myself to the breaking point, nights I truly believe I can have just one or two. The urges to pick up again can only be mastered, never truly put to rest.

I wrote for a while about my experiences getting sober. I reflected on my continued usage of marijuana. I want to follow up with one last reflective piece. I feel I hit all the points but I just failed to put it all together. I pat my own back and do not expect one from you ... I offer these thoughts to share with you my journey.

I mentioned a while back about the miracles that took place last August while in post detox. I entered the 10-day program convinced I was going to leave before I completed it. I walked out with a certificate in hand. Most valuable was what I had learned.

I cannot say enough about my counselor. First, she took the burden of constant A.A. meetings off my back. I dedicated an article about this in a previous Spare Change issue. Next, while she made clear she could not condone it, she failed to see an issue with marijuana, if in fact, it did not lead me back to other addictions. For once a counselor saw where I was coming from. Without this affirmation, I may not have lasted this long clean and sober.

Had it not been for her, I would have left detox feeling like I had to constantly attend meetings and marijuana should be considered a relapse. What my counselor successfully did for me, was change my thinking. She put it completely on me, no excuses allowed. For some folks, marijuana should be considered a relapse, if it makes you less productive,

which it can for some people. You may want to stay away from it. For too long I looked at the problem as being alcohol. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The problem is me. We can debate if I have a disease or not forever on in. If I have a problem with alcohol and drugs is not a question. I do.

The question is what I do to tame my problem? There really is no right or wrong and only I can answer the question for myself. There are billions of answers as there are billions of addicts around the globe and we all deal with the issue differently. My answer of marijuana may not be the best solution for you. You need to be creative with your sobriety, individualize it, and at 14 months clean that really is all I can or should offer you for advice. That, and, how should I put it...

Time and time again I hear this talk of "rewards". The idea being that getting sober will bring about "rewards" in your life. This is not true, at least, I do not take a liking to the term. The idea of a reward is that it is something being given in response to a good action you have taken. Look, I got sober for myself. I got sober so I can have bills paid with food on the table and cigarettes in my pocket. Let us rather call these benefits to having the right solution to my addiction. There are no rewards. No one is going to come running after you saying, 'Congratulations on making it to your year mark, here is 500 dollars.' That would be a reward and this does not happen. My counselor explained this to me. I need to make things happen and nothing and no one is going to hand me my success.

A blunt lady, I recall her saying to me something along the lines of, "Aaron, if you are doing this for your girl, or mom and dad, or whoever, you will fail." The key was to do this for myself. I did not get it then, however, I kind of do now. If you are not fully into it, then eventually when you walk by a bar, alone, with only you around, you will cave. Not only that, you will not be able to notice any of the benefits, if the only benefit

is getting your girl back. You will fail to notice that an old friend called you or that you are sleeping soundly and wake up in the mornings. None of this will matter because the one call you are waiting for never happened, she truly is done with you. Or whatever the main and only purpose was to your getting sober, it will cloud all of the other benefits and lead you to a relapse.

Given that our challenges with addictions are unique, so are our struggles. Everything along the way needs to be individualized. We live in a society that tries to group us together, I strongly feel, for myself, breaking away from groups and making this personal is necessary.

One basic struggle I have is keeping that balance between talking about challenges amongst peers and saying nothing. I deserve to be on no pedestal. I am no better in any way than someone still drinking and drugging. I still have friends that drink. I have chosen not to run from alcohol. I have chosen to hold on to my drinking friends, there is still indeed a friendship. However, at times, I want to partake in bar runs and football beers. And that leads to a much broader struggle I have.

The world is filled with alcoholics, functioning alcoholics. I walk by bars everyday and fight that urge. They all look so happy inside. Alcohol was once the center of my life. Unlike an old friend you can choose to ignore, this friendship is unavoidable. You have to face it head on every day. At some point, I question why I fight the urge? Is it worth all the headache? A couple of beers seem to make so much sense. I know I can be a functioning drinker. I write these words in sound mind. My urge is under control, however, at certain times these questions make perfect sense. I want to live life to the fullest degree, I want to get drunk again.

Many of you may suggest I should get to a meeting. I challenge this solution, for myself. Truth be told, relapse is pretty common for "meeting makers". A slight jab there, to a great cause. I support A.A., in a broad sense, and agree

with much of its philosophy, it is just not the only way. And I will often stop in on a meeting here and there and get a great deal out of it. I strongly recommend reading the literature of A.A. and giving the steps an honest attempt (which obviously includes sponsorship and meetings). Just do not buy into the folks who say, "You will fail without A.A.". That is misleading to say the least. That is saying you are not an individual and they know what is right for everyone.

I do not fight my urges by relying on meetings or making a phone call to a sponsor. A snow storm could prevent making it to a meeting. A phone call could go unanswered for any number of reasons. I find relying on anything or anyone to deal with an urge as nonsense and doomed to failure, but that is just me.

I fight the urge by sitting with it, in more than one sense. If I have access and time I may actually grab a beer, hold it to my lips, stare the thing down and let my thoughts race through my head. I may say the Lord's prayer, read the big book, listen to music, sit in silence, smoke a bowl, or put my head in a pillow and scream as loud as I can into it. Eventually, the miracle happens, the urge passes, and I go on my way. It may take hours for it to pass, I just need to be mindful that it will pass, no matter where I may be. It is all in my head, it is all thoughts, my thoughts, that form my perceptions. As my counselor said, it is about tuning out that addictive voice in my head and tuning up the sober one. It is that simple.

Let me thank my readers, Spare Change, my girlfriend, family and close friends who have stuck by me. I thank the Lord for you. Life is a blessing. My struggles pale too many others out there, my heart goes out to all of us throughout the world. Addiction is surly Satan's gift to man. It can be conquered, your own way. You heard me out, I would very much enjoy to hear how you did it, so long as you respect how I have.

AARON JAMES is a Spare Change News writer and vendor.

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seen the real world and know that helping even one person without receiving a tangible reward is a great gift.

Back then to the question: why? Why do all these people so selflessly give to others? Did they not listen to the words of Adam Smith? PBHA teaches students so many life skills if they pay attention. As the President Ekene Obi-

Okoye pointed out, "I had to learn how to interview people. I learned how to work with directors, how to train, how to teach other people and develop other students. I learned what a budget looked like, how to run a meeting - little skills that mean a lot. Not just philosophical thinking but practical skills." So in a sense students do get a reward, but still not rewards they can hold in their hands or necessarily polish their

résumé with. So why do they help?

The only answer comes from the Advocacy and Housing Program group officer, Jacob Cederbaum. "I stayed with all these programs because there is this really great feeling to doing this work. I would always leave in the morning after my shift with this kind of warm fuzzy feeling. It's super difficult to describe ... I loved helping out but also working just alongside other great Harvard students

and volunteers and also working in this community of people that I found to be gracious and generous and just good people down on their luck." The best guess may be that at the end of the day, the reason so many people dedicate their time to helping others is because of a vague, inexplicable human connection.

JULIE MONRAD is a freshman at Harvard University.

Food Stamps For Fast Food In Rhode Island

Robert Sondak
Spare Change News

Some 30,000 low-income households on food stamps in Rhode Island may now buy prepared restaurant meals at Subway fast food restaurants.

The Rhode Island Food Access Project will provide healthy food options for the homeless, disabled and elderly who cannot cook for themselves or store food where they live. Rhode Island is the first New England state to allow food stamp use at restaurants.

Beginning in the 1970s, the federal government gave the states the option of allowing the elderly and disabled to spend their food stamp allocation in restaurants rather than solely at grocery stores. In 1990, the government also extended the same privilege to homeless people with no access to kitchen.

But the use of food stamps in restau-



rants did not catch on until states began converting the stamps to electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards. So far, California, Arizona, Michigan, Florida and Kentucky allow EBT meal purchases at state-approved restaurants.

This Rhode Island pilot started in September at five Subway restaurants located in Providence. The small size of this program allows for quick statistical gathering and can help to serve as a role model for new programs or for the

expansion of current programs.

"A group of activists and myself went to work to get Subway to participate in this program," said Kathleen Gorman, director of the Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America. "Our State Department of Human Services was not a fan of the original program, but we got them to sign on."

Gorman pointed out that the program is small, with only five restaurants that have signed on. One weakness of the program is the fact that people living outside of Providence will have to travel to use their EBT cards for restaurant food.

"Half of these households live within greater Providence," Gorman said. "Even though the program is small, we have a good population base to work with."

Subway was selected because of its healthier food options. Subway's

sandwiches offer reduced sodium and saturated fat, and consumers can personalize meal combinations to include yogurt, fresh vegetables, water, milk and diet soda.

"We want to provide healthier food options for people who cannot cook,"

Gorman said. "We want it to be more than Subway, in the future, and include other local diners and restaurants."

Pat Baker, senior advocate from the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, pointed out that the Rhode Island food stamp meals program is controversial.

"Massachusetts officials are concerned about food cost," Baker said. "Officials have expressed concern over how much can be charged per meal."

Aaron Lavalley, from the USDA Office of Communications, was interviewed by the Pew Center on the States' Stateline news service. He highlighted

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Candidates for Council-at-Large speak at Rosie's Place Forum

Beatrice Bell
Spare Change News



On October 6th, 2011 the ladies at Rosie's Place met the candidates for city council.

Will Dorcena is running to be a Council-at-

Large member and he hopes to work at Boston City Hall to help people in the different Boston communities. He wants his daughter to have a better life than he did when he was a kid.

A guest at the forum asked Will, "What is the job situation really like?" Will replied to her, "You see all these construction jobs all over the city and you look to see if anybody from the neighborhoods are working there and all you see is license plates from New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Maine, Connecticut and New Jersey. You don't see anybody from Massachusetts. Why? Because they can't get the job due to construction jobs being union jobs. If you're not part of a union then you're not going to get the job."

After Will was Michael Flaherty. A guest asked Michael about jobs and Michael responded, "We have the Boston Residency Job Policy; it's for construction projects. So for construction projects, there's a requirement [that] you have to put to work so many

people from the neighborhoods of Boston; so many women and so many people of color. Right now, it's on the books but it never gets enforced. So you drive by a pretty big construction site, as I do regularly, and you see license plates from Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut and Maine. I have nothing against those people, but those are jobs that should be going to people from Roxbury, Dorchester, South Boston, Charlestown and all the neighborhoods of Boston."

On October 12th, the forum continued. I asked all the candidates the same question, so that I could gage whether or not I want to vote for any of them on November 8th when the City Council elections happen. I wanted to hear the candidates' views on Occupy Boston. These are their responses.

While candidate Steven J. Murphy was speaking, I kept thinking that he was Michael Flaherty, because they sound so much alike on the issues. When I asked him, "What's your viewpoint about what's going on with Occupy Boston?" Steven replied, "I'm very sympathetic to the cause. My viewpoint is this; I'm the kind of person who grew up on the streets of Boston and nobody ever handed me anything. I've scraped for everything I got and I've lived paycheck to paycheck. I've seen big oil, Exxon Mobile and these other companies, really rape our economy and they got bailed out

at one point. Big banks got bailed out and then they paid themselves bonuses with the public funds. It's the little guy that always takes it on the chin all the time, whether it's Wall Street playing games to manipulate the economy or the oil companies raising the price of gas to \$4.00 a gallon. They almost put Chrysler and General Motors out of business because of doing that.

"I think there's a lot to be said for a system that allows that; and not continuing in its present form. Because of that, I'm very sympathetic to the people who are down there on the Greenway, expressing their dismay at corporate greed and corruption at the highest levels of finance."

Candidate Felix Arroyo was next and he mainly talked about LGBT issues, because that's what people wanted to talk about, even though it started a mini war in Rosie's Place. Because he spoke a lot about LGBT issues, I said, "I want to know two things; 1. What is your viewpoint on Occupy Boston and, 2. Why don't we have any transgender specific shelters set in Boston to meet their needs?"

Felix's response was, "I just don't know the answer to [question] number two; I'm going to say hopefully she knows the answer to that rather than I do [he was referring to a transgender person in the back of the room]. My understanding is there are at least two shelters that are open to LGBT groups.

I don't know. I'll have to look into it. I think there should be more than just two shelters. They should all be open to LGBT and I'm not sure why they are not. As for Occupy Boston, I am sympathetic 1000 percent to the idea that those of us in the working class have no opportunity to experience what the smaller percentage of the world has. That's not the America I grew up in when I was in school and that's not the America that I want to live in. I love my country but I want to live in a country that's fairer."

Last to appear after Felix was Sheneal Parker. She gave her normal speech about why she wants to be a city councilor and she talked about her family. What surprised us, though, was the level of Sheneal's knowledge about things which she hadn't spoken of the first time that we'd met her. When I asked her, "What do you think about what Occupy Boston is doing?" she responded with, "I'm in full support of what they are doing and what they are trying to do. I went down there yesterday (10/11/2011) to learn about them and for a few photo opportunities with some of the people. I think it's a good cause that they are fighting for. I am behind them 100 percent. I think that it's a good idea to fight against the greedy corporations and to tell them that we don't like what you are doing and we're going to call you on your

BELL continued on next page

A Cup of Tea For Occupy

Joel Foster
Spare Change News

On the first night of Occupy Boston, when protesters flooded Dewey Square and set up a makeshift tent village, I overheard a conversation. It was spoken between a young kid watching the action unfold and an older guy, who identified himself as a former Democratic activist.

The gist of the conversation was that these protests were the left's response to the Tea Party and, any day now, the democrats would cling on and make this all about Obama's reelection.

Even then, I felt that this guy was completely off the mark. At least I'd hoped he was.

Because on that first night, there was no shortage of folks with Ron Paul shirts, libertarians who were just as sick as the rest of the 99% of seeing the rotten political machine carrying on as usual. I figured, rather than make this the antithesis of the Tea Party protests, the Occupy movement should invite the Tea Party into the fold. I know it sounds crazy, especially with the images of ignorant and sometimes racist views of Tea Partiers that we've seen on TV.

But we all need to remember that the media helps shape how we view specific groups and those people had nothing to do with the original Tea Party. Rather, the group was eventually co-opted by the hard-line Republican Party and steered away from their original goals, which had more to do with fighting the Fed and government corruption than it did with reducing corporate regulations, as it is now.

So here we find the Occupy movement at a crossroads. Do they accept people who may not share all of their views in order create an overwhelming response to the abuses that both groups oppose?

I feel that it would be unwise not to. While we're seeing the media portray



A member of the Occupy Boston movement holds a sign outside their encampment in Boston on October 12, 2011.

PHOTO / REUTERS/BRIAN SNYDER

both movements as enemies of each other, it's interesting to notice that, at heart, both Occupy and the Tea Party were spurred to action by the same event: the bank bailouts.

In essence, both groups are incensed at the level of corruption that exists between big corporations and the government. While they disagree on the minutiae, the underlying goal is common. Besides, do you ever expect a mass of people to agree on everything?

Here's a venn diagram that was drawn up by Slate's Jacob Weisberg:

So you see, not so different after all. Harvard Professor Lawrence Lessig also weighed in on the subject, speaking to the crowd at Occupy Wall Street. He said that, no matter what you might

think of them, the Tea Party is part of the 99% and, as a result, should be included.

Even more convincing is the seeming endorsement from Tea Party co-founder Karl Denninger, who said:

"Back in 2008, I wrote that we will actually see change when the people come, they set up camp, and they refuse to go home. That appears to be happening now."

The mainstream media continues to pedal the Tea Party versus Occupy narrative, even though it never would have existed were it not for the media to fan its flames. But remember, conflict sells. Good guys versus bad guys, Republicans versus Democrats. It sells papers to start a fight by fitting us all

into categories and setting us loose on each other. What we often forget, as humans, is that we often want the same things. Justice and peace come to mind.

Strength comes in numbers. If the Occupy movement really wants to make a lasting statement, they need to recruit a more diverse crowd. What would be more diverse, and powerful, than two supposed enemies joining together? Rather than focus on the divisive issues, they should stick to the underlying message: namely, that government and corporations have been in bed for too long and it is time to wake up.

JOEL FOSTER is a freelance writer and founder of www.mindwafers.com.

greedy ways until you change your ways.

"It's not right that 99 percent of everybody in the USA is poor or close to it and 1 percent of everybody else is rich and they are controlling everything. They control food, housing, gas, electricity, jobs, money, Social Security, the banks, the schools and the government, while the 99 percent of the population have none of the same oppor-

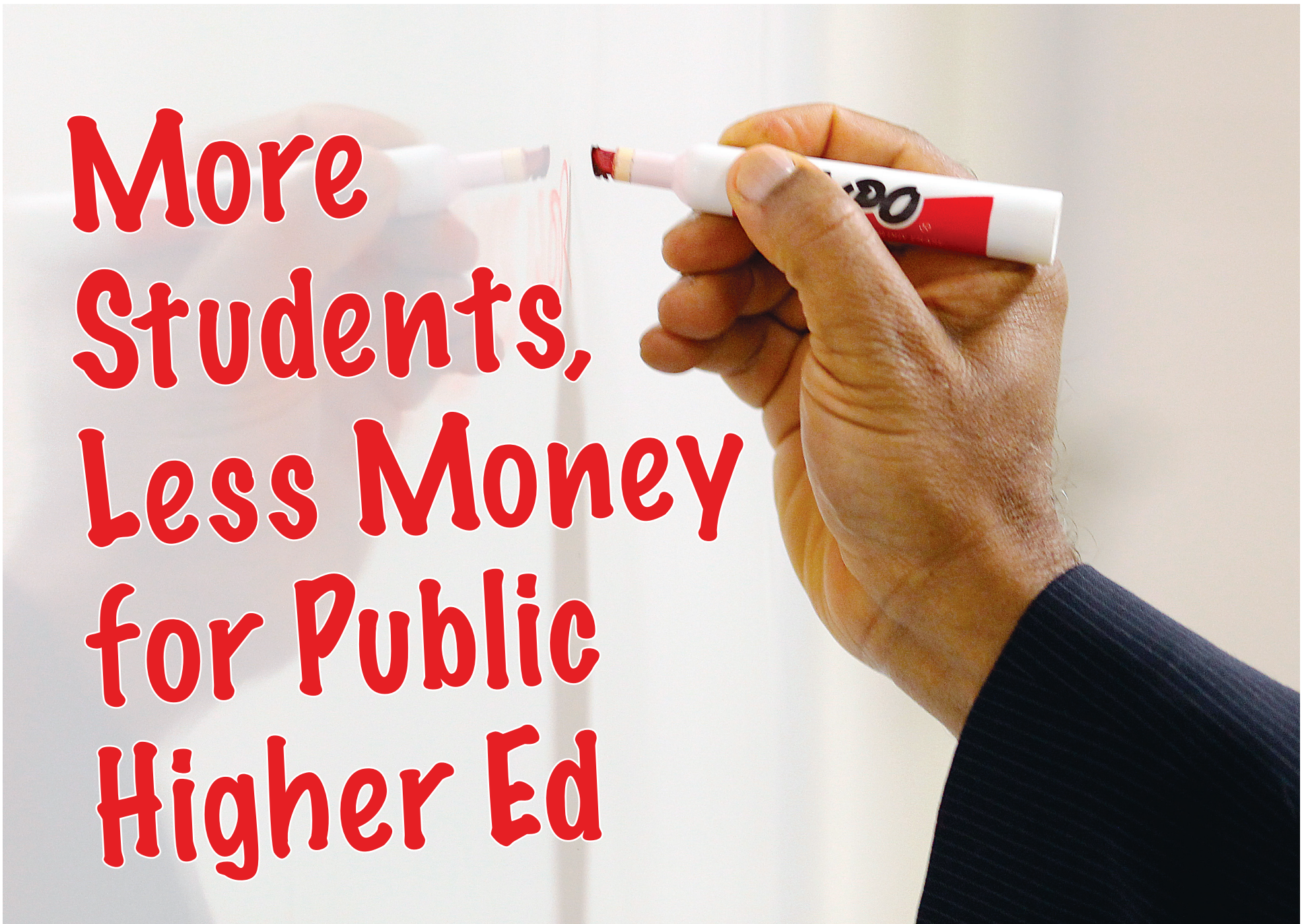
tunities. America was not built on the premise of the 1 percent being rich and the 99 percent being poor. Our forefathers fought for fairness and equality amongst all classes of people. Occupy Boston has a good idea in fighting to get what is rightfully ours. They're not just fighting corporate greed and they're not just fighting to end ruthless financial institutional tactics which lead to foreclosures on our homes. They are

fighting to end homelessness, and they are fighting for fairness and equality amongst that 99 percent of the people who have nothing or close to nothing. They don't have equal opportunities for education, jobs, food, housing, medical care or anything else which we all need. I fully support Occupy Boston and their efforts."

Remember, people, November 8, 2011 is the day you vote for city coun-

cil. So get out there and make your voice heard in your community. Vote for somebody that you like. You get four choices for Council-at-Large. Your voice is important.

BEATRICE BELL is a Spare Change News writer and vendor. She recently found housing.



More Students, Less Money for Public Higher Ed

Adam Sennott
Spare Change News

Enrollment at publicly funded colleges is up, driven by a demand for an affordable college education and, for many students, a focus on workforce development with the real-life connections to regional employers that are found at community colleges.

At the same time, state support for those state and community colleges is down sharply. So is student financial aid.

The results? Higher mandatory student fees. Steep cutbacks on the state's campuses. Increased class sizes. No money for faculty and staff pay raises, early retirement incentives for veteran faculty and staff and an increased reliance on adjunct faculty. Cuts to everything from library budgets to sports programs.

Overall, the result is an increased pressure on publicly funded colleges to do more with less, one of the driving forces in the state's economic growth.

Take, for example, Bunker Hill Community College.

BHCC is receiving \$17.9 million in state support for the current fiscal year. That's down from the \$22.1 million it received in fiscal year 2009.

Meanwhile, enrollment over that same time period has shot up at BHCC, from 11,009 in 2009 to approximately 13,000 this school year.

Similarly, state support for all state and community colleges in Massachusetts is down. State funding amounts to \$948 million in the current academic year, down from \$1.13 billion in FY 2009. Meanwhile, a recent state Department of Higher Education report shows a 23 percent increase in undergraduate enrollment at the state's community colleges, state universities and University of Massachusetts campuses between fall 2001 and fall 2011. The report also shows that selected colleges and universities have witnessed dramatic fall-to-fall enrollment increases in the past year. Framingham State University's enrollment increased 15 percent, while Worcester State University's enrollment grew by 9 percent. These increases occurred despite a smaller pool of high school graduates

across the state due to various demographic changes.

Across the public higher education system, the report says, the rate of undergraduate enrollment growth - 18 percent - was more than double the rate of enrollment growth at private colleges and universities in the Commonwealth (7 percent) between fall 2006 and fall 2010. Massachusetts' 18 percent enrollment growth from fall 2006 to fall 2010 also outpaced that of peer institutions in other New England states, where enrollment grew by an overall 12 percent during the same period.

Massachusetts is comprised of 15 community colleges, nine state universities, and the five-campus University of Massachusetts system. Although demand for public higher education is at an all-time high, state funding for public higher education has been cut by \$164,227,471, or 16.4 percent of the entire budget for public higher education, since the FY 2009 budget, according to the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center.

With unemployment in

Massachusetts at nearly 8 percent, the demand for public higher education has exploded. According to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's website, more than 260,000 students enroll into one of the state's 29 campuses annually.

"I think it's already too expensive as it is, but that's really the educational system around here," said Colin Boisvert, a double major in sociology and French at UMass-Boston. "It's definitely not easy [paying for college]. I got help from my parents, which is probably the only reason I can afford it right now."

Tyler Murphy, an English major at UMass-Boston, said: "It's definitely been a struggle having to work full-time just to get in here and get my education. I get loans, so that covers about half, and then the other half, I will have to work like 50 to 60 hours during the summer just to pay for rent and then pay somewhere around \$2,400 once the semester starts."

While it's a struggle for students to pay for classes, they also have to

continued on next page

afford books.

"That was why spending so much time working was tough; knowing that on top of the tuition I'd have to cover like \$300 worth of books," Murphy said. "I know that if my computer crashes at any point I don't have a chance, so I've got my fingers crossed there."

While student enrollment isn't a problem, state and federal funding is. However, according to Katy Abel, a spokesperson for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, while students are paying more, Massachusetts is doing better than most states and even leads the nation in the number of people with associate degrees.

"Across the United States, obviously we are in a situation where we have cutbacks that are occurring on the federal level and on a state level because we're in an economic crisis," said Abel. "So, in some states public higher education budgets have experienced double-digit cutbacks. In Massachusetts, we are lucky, luckier than most, in that we have a governor who is very committed to education, period, and education through college."

However, over the past three years, the budgets for higher education have been cut drastically. Since FY 2009, the budget for the five-campus UMass system has been cut \$86.2 million, while community colleges have been cut another \$42.6 million, and other state universities have lost \$35.4 million from their budgets, MassBudget figures show.

Unlike most private colleges and universities, where the majority of charges come from tuition, at state universities and community colleges most of a student's cost is incurred in fees.

"Tuition at Massachusetts colleges and universities has not risen in over a decade," said Abel. "Fees, on the other hand, which are set by local boards at community colleges and state universities and the UMass board, have risen because these institutions don't have any choice. The overall picture for Massachusetts is that we're doing better than a lot of other states, but that doesn't mean that students aren't paying more. They are."

Another area that has seen decreased funding is student financial aid. According to Abel, in the 1980s, the MASSGrant program paid for a large portion of the cost for a student to attend college. Today it covers significantly less.

"The MASSGrant program in the 1980s covered 80 percent of a student's cost, and that has fallen dramatically, to the point where now the MASSGrant program covers a small fraction of total



PHOTO / REUTERS FILE PHOTOS

State Funding for UMass, Community Colleges, & State Universities

	FY 2009 GAA	FY 2010 Final	FY 2011	FY 2012 Current	Amount Cut During Fiscal Crisis	% Cut
Community Colleges	\$252,976,366	250,551,672	230,153,557	210,366,728	-\$42,609,638	-16.8%
State Universities	\$230,417,754	228,209,278	209,606,853	195,008,769	-\$35,408,985	-15.4%
Umass	\$520,527,931	515,538,844	470,149,968	434,319,082	-\$86,208,849	-16.6%
TOTAL	\$1,003,922,050	\$994,299,794	\$909,910,377	\$839,694,579	-\$164,227,471	-16.4%

*All numbers are adjusted for inflation, expressed in FY2012 dollars.

MASS. BUDGET

expenses," said Abel. "So that means that, you know, 14 percent of the average college cost, down from 80 percent in 1988."

In addition to the MASSGrant program, the FY 2012 budget provides \$87.6 million for the state scholarship program, a cut of \$12.7 million when compared to the FY 2009 appropriation of \$96.9 million, or \$100.3 million in inflation-adjusted dollars, according to MassBudget.

Although state funding and financial aid is down, Abel notes that Gov. Deval Patrick has been investing and improving infrastructure at existing college campuses. Abel also pointed out that the state only pays a portion of the cost to construct these new buildings, while individual colleges work to raise the remaining balance of the cost.

"There was a bond authorization that was approved by the administration and funding from that bond authorization has resulted in a building boom across the campuses," said Abel. "At UMass-Boston, for example, they have broken ground on a new science complex. UMass-Boston hadn't had a single new building in decades."

One school that recently added a new building is Bunker Hill

Community College, which unveiled its new state-of-the-art Health and Wellness Center last year. Although BHCC has set enrollment records in each of the last 12 semesters, they have also experienced cuts in their state funding.

In FY 2012 BHCC received \$17,496,631 in state appropriations, down from the \$20,897,000 it received in FY 2009, according to Mass.gov, and less than 30 percent of their \$59,307,382 projected revenue for FY 2012.

However, because BHCC has seen such a dramatic explosion in its enrollment, the college has been able offset some of the cuts in state funding through tuition and fees. According to Jesse M. Thompson, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer for Bunker Hill Community College, every percentage point enrollment increases will amount to nearly \$330,000. At the time of our interview BHCC's enrollment was up 6 percent from the same time last year.

"Basically what that allows us to do is to continue to provide support services to students, continue to hire full-time faculty and do things like that," said Thompson. "With the increased enrollment, that's helped offset some

Professor Christian Agunwamba writes on the board while teaching his "Fundamentals of Algebra" class at Bunker Hill Community College in Boston

of the decline in the state appropriations. We could do so much more, but it just means it's a limit as to how much we can continue to grow."

According to the Massachusetts Community Colleges website, community colleges are a key to workforce development in Massachusetts. BHCC even offers programs with, among other companies, NSTAR and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. However, these programs receive little state funding and it's up to the colleges to collaborate with outside industry.

"[The state] gives us workforce incentive dollars, that might be like \$50,000 dollars a year to a \$100,000 dollars a year, but that's it," said Thompson. "The rest of it comes from companies that we work with."

Although many schools might find ways to offset their losses in state appropriations this year, filling holes in their budget might be something they have to get used to, if they haven't already.

"I think the honest answer is no one really knows," said Abel. "No one is expecting a helicopter to rain dollars on the public colleges and universities of Massachusetts. We know that all the indications are that over the next few years, things are going to be difficult. So no one has a crystal ball."

ADAM SENNOTT is former editor of *Spare Change News*.

Voices From The Streets

Voices from the Streets — a forum for those whose voices are too often ignored. From narratives to opinion to advice, these writers portray a unique perspective on life that might otherwise go unnoticed. Below, find that turning an ear towards those normally silenced opens the door to understanding and relating to those who have faced life on the street.

Poetry at Occupy Boston

Marc D. Goldfinger
Spare Change News

Following this short piece is a poem I read at Occupy Boston Poetry.



As I walked into the camping area I was impressed at the organization of the occupation. The people had a logistics tent, a media tent and a staging area where they would hold meetings and entertainment.

It was truly an honor to be part of the entertainment for such a worthy cause. The crowd of occupiers was polite, good listeners and actually made up of all ages.

After I read this poem an older woman in a wheelchair asked where she could get a copy of it. I was so impressed with the fact that a woman her age in a wheel chair and on oxygen was there, I was happy to give her my reading copy of the poem that will follow this short piece.

I find it ironic that as I watch the television network news the biggest piece I heard last night was about a tobacco store that had been robbed 4 times, once before the occupation took place and three times since and the sound bite was wondering if it were the occupiers that were robbing the store. Considering that I hardly saw any smokers in the crowd, I sincerely doubt that.

I encourage everyone who lives in this area to drop in to this gentle peace-loving community. As you exit the South Station near Dewey Square, the tent community is visible and easy to access. I walked in; no one challenged my right to be there and everyone I met was friendly.

During the Depression they called the tent cities Hoovervilles. Maybe the tent cities of the occupiers can be called Bushvilles because George W. Bush sent our economy rocketing into the hole with his corporate support and never-ending wars.

Stop in and occupy for a little while. After all, YOU are one of the 99 percent. Thank you for supporting Spare Change News. We are 99 per-centers also.

What I wanted to say was

6 billion people counting down
While dead zones grow in the oceans
While people wrap Christmas presents
While people plant car bombs
While children learn to be good citizens
While some parents choose which child dies
While Bob Dylan writes ads for Victoria's Secret
While Madonna adopts a child from Africa
While HIV spreads like an ink stain on a paper towel
While children play video games shooting grey-heads
While bees, hummingbirds, and bat populations



decline

While bees, hummingbirds, and bats pollinate plants

While the oceans are fished out by factory ships
While Halloween disappears
While some countries train children to kill
While some countries train children to kill
While some countries train children to kill
While my hair turns grey as I heal
While my refrigerator is humming
While someone is hunting for a scrap of food
While I lay warm in my bed
While my friends die in the shelters
While the president of the United States makes

decisions

While the death count in Iraq is still growing
While I remember the same thing happened in Viet Nam

While I sit at my computer to write poetry
While my wife is hard at work
While 56% of state prisoners show symptoms of mental illness

While we spend so much money to kill
While we spend so little to heal
While I wonder why China's Yellow River turned red

While I notice that so many factories are on river banks

While I go to the bank to get money to buy comic books

While 24% of jail inmates are psychotic
While my motorcycle sits in a shed surrounded by dead leaves

I think about all the plans I had when I was young
They were good plans and I had high hopes
Well I am registered to vote and I do that
I read quite a bit and write a little more
I love my wife and say my prayers
Sometimes I just sit and think
Sometimes I try to sit and not think
Why do we always have money to kill people
Why is there never enough money to feed every-

one

As I read this poem there are machines running all
GOLDFINGER continued on next page

tales from the curb

A Sad Story

James Shearer
Spare Change News



Once in a while I have one of those moments when I get depressed and wonder in this big world of ours if I make a difference, or if I even really matter. You know the feeling. You work hard, you provide for others, but sometimes it

doesn't seem like enough.

When I get like that I look up in the sky and ask a God of my understanding for some help. Most times I get no answers, the big guy or girl (sorry ladies) would rather I dig my own way out. But sometimes the good Lord throws me a bone.

Take this past weekend. I have been patiently awaiting the arrival of my next godchild. I'm already a godfather several times over, but all of my godchildren are boys. So I'm pretty excited about having a goddaughter. Anyway the mother and father are currently homeless, and recently they went missing. I was worried. Having an expecting mom who is also homeless can be a tad concerning.

Finding them became a priority. I had no clue where to look first. I tried old friends, neighborhoods – you know the drill. Finally, by the end of the week I had just about given up. But then an old friend, Norman, called me. To make a long story short, he just happened to know them and they were at Occupy Boston. I went down and found them and so I got my bone, trying to get them off the street.

So I sat about trying to accomplish that task. And you would not believe the resistance I was met with. The mother has a criminal history, but actually hasn't been in trouble in quite some time, and what did that matter anyway? She's with child.

What about the government's grand master plan to get everyone off the street? What about that new program HomeBase? Wasn't this the answer or the alternative to putting families up in hotels? Why don't the parents of my godchild qualify? Of course no one had a clear-cut answer to this. Sadly this story doesn't have a happy ending – as of right now those parents are still on the street. And I still have to help them, so in the long run I do matter – to them and to other homeless people who need my help. Thank you, God.

On another matter, I have been hit with all kinds of questions about my leaving Spare Change. First I need to say I am simply leaving my position as board president in September of next year. I'm not resigning, quitting or retiring from anything, and I am not leaving Spare Change, I will continue as a mentor or coach. I fully intend to be around, and, speaking of that, there needs to be an organization for me to be around. With that in mind, the holiday appeal is out and we need your support. So please give and check out our website www.sparechangenews.net and find out all about the great things we are doing and help us celebrate our 20th year.

JAMES SHEAR is a co-founder and board president of Spare Change News.

As the Sun Sets Over Port-au-Prince

Jacques Fleury
Spare Change News



In honor of my mother Marie-Evelynne, an iconoclast in her own right

In Haiti I grew up taking blood baths, basking in the epoch of oppression. My nation was occupied by the French, and despite my French influence, I consider myself a Creole poet and not a French Creole poet. My Caribbean spice rack is stocked full of flavored stories, which I will gladly tell you just enough of to satisfy your hunger for the knowledge of the courage of my people; since my blood was once the color of slavery. But now, since I left Haiti for America, I dream the dream that every American dreams: to sleep on the pillows of justice, freedom and opportunity. After all, aren't we all entitled to happiness? So now, watch me run from the lasso of the unjust, just to make it under the wire of justice.

The great Cuban poet, Joseito Fernandez, who penned the lyrics to the popular song "Guantanamera" wrote, "...with the poor people of this earth, I want to share my faith." Like him, my heart has been oppressed and wired, my vocal cords tapped. But like the great Rhythm and Blues singer Marvin Gaye so eloquently said, "True artists suffer for the people", and so I am going to continue to say what I need to say, even if it means some suffering along the way.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus landed on the island of Hispaniola and gave it its name. Taino Arawak Indians, who referred to their homeland as "Hayti" or "Mountainous Land", originally inhabited the island. In 1697 slaves were sent to Haiti. The island was cher-

ished by European powers for its natural resources, including cocoa, cotton and sugar cane. The French shipped in thousands of slaves mainly from West Africa to harvest the crops. In 1804, after a slave rebellion led by a man named Bookman in 1791, Haiti became the first free Black nation in the world under General Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who declared himself Emperor. America feared that the slave rebellion in Haiti would ignite anti-slavery insurgencies in the U.S. southern states, and as we all now know, eventually it did. Perhaps this is one the many of multifarious reasons why America's relationship with Haiti is strained to this day.

The Uses of Haiti, a book by Harvard University professor Dr. Paul Farmer, chronicles America's long and perplexing history with Haiti. Tourism flourished in Haiti from the 1950s to 1986, practically ending with the Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier mutiny. Haiti's main tourist attraction is La Citadelle Laferriere built on mountains overlooking Port-au-Prince. It has walls 130 feet high and is the largest fortress in the Americas, and was designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a world history site in 1982. It was built to keep the newly independent nation from French incursions, which never materialized.

Yet still, sometimes I wonder, "Why can't I easily co-exist with my inner tropical child?" Maybe it's because in your eyes I am nothing but a stereotype, a risk that most in power would rather not take. I am nothing if not the product of Neo-Freudian philosophy, so don't criticize my personality. An honorable part of me knows that I'm more than just an island "bro" without the afro. What I am is a Caribbean soup stock full of vegetables with circumscribed roots;

so come take a spoonful of my flavor, I am more than just a Caribbean brother. My forefathers were more than fugitive slaves, they were purple tropical birds adorned in the mythical, waiting to go on sabbatical, while our Haitian land remained fallow, praying, and begging for something sacramental. They treated us like debris, even after we facilitated their safari. Sometimes I feel like I want to be magical, so that I can live life invisible to the hatred, hypocrisy, racism, sexism and classism that permeates my existence. To insolent interchanges of ignorance, to an overflow of content and arrogance, I surrender. I linger like a disturbed dissenter. I want to be a paradigm; I want to be a prolific producer. I don't want to live my life like a silent singer and I hope you don't either.

Growing up partly in Haiti with mostly marred memories of mango trees and my macabre childhood swaying in the lazy wind, was no walk in the park, more like a walk in the woods. As we know, the woods are much less manicured than the park. In the woods, it is not always clear what lies ahead. One minute you may be leaping with gaiety downhill, and the next minute you may find yourself straining and striving to reach a summit. Don't get me wrong, on Haitian terrains, there were certainly moments of triumph (fabulous cuisine and a colorful culture), but unfortunately they were equally matched, and often surpassed, by moments of failure (living under the constant weather of fear and intimidation).

The government was an archetype for this ideology. As the tyrannical government oppressed the people, the people then reciprocated by oppressing each other. To my chagrin, I realized that the mentality of the Haitian people was "Every man and woman for himself or herself," and trust was actually nonexistent. In Haiti, we were all subjected to living within a conspiracy of silence. "See no evil, speak no evil," because "evil" had the people under panoptic surveillance. This could have been a family member hired as a spy to turn

their own in, should they speak unfavorably of the government.

You see, in Haiti, dialect was in handcuffs. Fear tore souls to pieces and left them scattered along the scorching pavement and dark dirt roads for hungry dogs to feed on. Imagine a place where a teacher is without students, and his only freedom is to be ignorant. His voice is but a squeak in the fading forests, while the tongue of dissension lies entombed at the bottom of an empty well, waiting for a subversive echo to give its voice a chance at change. Even though dialect of dissension in Haiti is gagged, its voice is an intricacy of words, loaded to snap its constraint and recoup its power!

The guts of the Haitian nation have exploded since the devastating earthquake back on January 12th, 2010. Its long, dirty yet valiant and pioneering history sprawled, snarling and unsympathetic, in discordant bliss all over the ubiquitous dirt roads. All the humanitarians who rushed over to help the aggrieved people could almost hear the debris hiss, as the apathetic summer air suffocated Creole fireflies. Sounds of volatile youths banging their heads against scarcities echoed like gun shots in the empty fear-filled streets, while the savage beat cops known as "ton ton macoutes" strutted around town. Baby Doc, rueful that he couldn't fly, fell prey to domestic maladies and was exiled to France. "Garcon!" mama used to call me. "Yes, ma ma!" With fear fighting to hold back her valiant voice she said, "Never walk bare foot on cold concrete and never EVER talk too quick!" Then I was forcing sleep, was stifled by what was supple. One day mama woke me up and said, "Time to go America!" Then I tried smiling, but my big parched patois lips felt raw.

Jacques Fleury's book: *"Sparks in the Dark: A Lighter Shade of Blue, A Poetic Memoir"* about life in Haiti & America was featured in the *Boston Globe*. Contact him at: haitianfirefly@gmail.com and visit his website at: www.thehaitianfireflyproductions.com.

GOLDFINGER continued from previous page
over the world

Once upon a time there was a man
who became a poet

Words are powerful things

A bullet or a bomb can only explode
one time

It's true that many will die

But words can be used over and over

Maybe one day we will stop killing
each other

Because of something someone said

I would like to be the person who
says the magic words

But if it's you who have the magic
words

That will stop all the greed, killing,
and cruelty

I hope you say them soon

Words are powerful things

Say them already, say them say them

I've got my ear to the ground

And the way the ground is humming

It feels like we're running out of time.

MARC D. GOLDFINGER is a formerly
homeless vendor who is now housed. He can
be reached at junkietroll@yahoo.com Marc
also has books on www.smashwords.net that
can be downloaded for \$2.99.

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be running a scam.

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Spare Change News or any outside organization.

Westwood Lodge, 1980–1990

By Sarah Hannah

And then again, you go west, to that perennial
Resort at the end of the bending street, row of pines,
Where Sexton strolled through noon, made mocassins,
And danced in a circle: the Summer Hotel.

Why every tumid season, cicadas burning blue,
Beetles mounting one another, chewing all the flowers,
Do your pupils pinpoint, your breath sours?
I call the police, who've nothing else to do

("Safest city in America" or so our town's ordained);
They arrive in flashing squadrons: at least eleven
Armed, sturdy men, five cars, for one uneven,
Overly-sedated woman past sixty. You've downed

Some sedatives with wine. How many? Your swoon
Gives none away; the Xanax bottle lies beneath the bed
With cigarettes and nylon socklets, so your stomach's pumped
Just in case. You always make it known to someone

Swiftly after it's been done: you will be saved. Inside,
Double-locked, you wait in line to use the phone. (Twenty-five
Years later, I still dream you're calling; you're alive,
Away someplace, but a vast conspiracy of bureaucrats hides

You from me. I wake, cried out. Does it mean, and where?)
Back then you reached me, asked for cigarettes,
Stockings, underwear, and the small two-volume set
Of Redon (ed. Rosaline Bacou). It doesn't matter

That the text's in French—it's got color plates.
While you're gone, I have the house to myself,
Turn the radio up, sing to the bookshelves,
Across the stucco arches, to the ceiling's walnut

Beams: Jay and the Americans' "This Magic Moment,"
With some irony, but not quite as much
As one might think, considering the lawn's gone thatch,
Burned brown, you're in lock up, and my paycheck's spent.
Speaking of lawns, ours was once all sun and dapple.
Childhood. A man mowed, a woman watered.
Something had to rot, go sour; someone ate the apple.
God died in the yard, à la Søren Kierkegaard—

In the doom of the downward slash: Existentialism
One-Oh-One, for frosh. I lie out and rub
Baby oil on my legs, hope to burn. God's a white grub.
He ate the lawn, but we can't afford to exterminate him.

Upside: you can't yell at me for wasting time lying
In the sun (to please a man?). Downside: the docs
Tell me each time you come back in, they'll lock
You up for longer. If this crazy summer torquing

Doesn't stop, they'll put you somewhere else
For good (when we've run through the insurance)—
An institution of the state. No moon dance,
Cakewalk. Or maybe dancing all the time in circles.

But for now, the asylum grass we walk on's trimmed,
Thick, and green. We watch the sky from Adirondack
Chairs. I bring flowers—cosmos, phlox, and hollyhock,
Your favorite—from our garden. Then, on a whim

One day, I arrive early, to your delight; I'm the only one,
After all, who comes. I've packed your acid-free
Paper and watercolors, though you didn't ask. Forgive me,
You say, I'll paint planets. Best thing I could have done.



I met Sarah Hannah when we read together for Tapestry of Voices at the Boston Public Library and she said she would send me poetry for Spare Change News. She sent three poems. Sarah Hannah died suddenly in 2007. She received her Doctorate and MFA in Poetry from Columbia University and was a well-loved faculty member at Emerson College where she taught graduate and undergraduate poetry.

-Marc Goldfinger



Poems may be submitted to: Marc D. Goldfinger,
76 Unity Ave. Belmont MA, 02478

or email: sparechange poetry@gmail.com. SCN cannot return poetry
submissions, and authors will be contacted only if their poems are published.

Every Thursday
Squawk Coffeehouse, 9 pm
1555 Mass Ave., Cambridge
Open mike for poets and musicians.

Every Saturday
Out of the Blue Gallery, 8 pm
106 Prospect St., Cambridge
\$3-5 suggested donation.
671-354-5287

Every Sunday
Lizard Lounge Poetry Slam, 7 pm
1667 Mass. Ave., Cambridge
\$5. 671-547-0759

Every Monday
Out of the Blue Gallery, 8 pm
106 Prospect St., Cambridge
\$4 suggested donation.
617-354-5287

Every Wednesday
Boston Poetry Slam, 8 pm
Cantab Lounge, 738 Mass. Ave.,
Cambridge
\$3. 21+. 617-354-2685

Second Thursday of Every Month
Tapestry of Voices, 6:30 pm
Borders, 10 School St., Boston
Free. 617-557-7188

Second Tuesday of Every Month
Newton Free Library, 7 pm
330 Homer St. 617-796-1360

Third Saturday of Every Month
Boston Haiku Society meeting,
2-6 pm
Kaji Aso Studio,
40 St. Stephen St., Boston
\$3. 617-247-1719

Poetry event listings may be submitted to sceditor@homelessempowerment.org

'The homeless need a place to go'

JEREMY "JAY JAY" PARKS
Spare Change News

I was homeless for nine years in Florida.

My story begins on a cold night when my mom decided that I could not live with her any more, so she packed my stuff and put it outside the door.

I went to my friend's house, because I was only 17 at the time. His mother took me in; I went to school like normal and got into fixing cars and ATVs.

When we graduated high school, my friend and I joined the Army. He went in as a tank driver and I went on to the Army Rangers.

Five years passed and I was wounded in Iraq when my motorcade exploded. Another gentleman and I were the only two survivors that day.

The Army told my family I was dead and they went to a funeral, but it was not I in the coffin. I showed up six months later and my parents thought I was a ghost.

After I settled down at my parents' house, and my wounds healed, I began fixing my mom and dad's car. My sister bought her first car, so I fixed that too.

I went to get a job; I got one at a garage where I worked for four years. I was forced to leave that job because of my suspended Florida license. I tried to get another job, but I couldn't because the economy was so bad.

I lost my home, my car, and my respect for the government. I was homeless for the first time in my life and didn't know what to do; I didn't let that keep me down.

I went to Salvation Army in Formers,

Fla. where they fed me every day and gave me a place to stay if it was cold outside. I made a friend named Paul, who works at the Salvation Army and he helped me so much. Paul made sure all the homeless people were safe and were not put down as drunks and bad people.

He had news people come and chose me to speak on the news about being homeless. He is a good man and God will bless him as he continues to do God's work.

I moved to Massachusetts to better my life and to restart the Boston Guardian Angels. My chapter leader moved up here to be with his kids and I tagged along. I came up here and found out that the shelters up here don't help you out.

My friend and his friend got kicked

out of a shelter in Cambridge for no reason, and it makes me mad that shelters can do this. They should have their money and fancy stuff taken away and be homeless for two months. That should show them how us homeless people live.

We need more soup kitchens, so we can get a warm meal and a place where we can get a shower.

We need more shelters that care for the homeless and don't treat us like a piece of garbage, but like a person. The homeless also need a place to go where the police won't bother or make things more difficult for us.

JEREMY PARKS is formerly homeless and a member of the Guardian Angels.

SONDAK continued from page 7

the strengths and weaknesses of the food stamp restaurant meals program.

Lavallee pointed out that the program's overall goal is to help improve the level of nutrition for low-income people. This restaurant meals program will help those who may not be able to cook for themselves or don't have a place to cook. Otherwise, these people would have few means for using food stamps. So far, the overall number of people participating in such programs is small. In other words, not everyone who has food stamps may choose to participate in the food stamp restaurant meals program. Lavallee mentioned that the Rhode Island program is limited to 33,000 households. This represents only 20 percent of the nearly 165,000 SNAP (food stamp) program clients.

Lavallee stated that the USDA has clear food regulations. Food stamps can be used only for foods for households to eat. These foods include bread, fruit, meat and dairy products. Alcohol, cigarettes and household supplies do not qualify. One reason that the program has raised controversy is because it will allow SNAP clients, many of whom collect welfare, to buy fast food with their food stamps.

Jessica Bartholow, an advocate with the Western Center for Law and Poverty in Sacramento, was interviewed by the Stateline news service. In her opinion, the food stamp restaurant meals program concerns are overblown, and a meal at a fast food restaurant is better than no meal. She also noted that many fast food restaurants such as Subway,



and more recently, McDonald's, now offer healthy choices.

Bartholow stated that the recent controversy about the California program has changed because of the focus on healthy meal choices. California's program is the nation's largest, and now some 53 counties in California that were not participating are reconsidering joining.

Frederick Sneesby, communications officer for the R.I. Department of Human Services, was also interviewed by Stateline. He thinks that there is more of an upside than a downside to the Rhode Island meals program. Sneesby stated that the homeless, elderly and disabled with limited cooking facilities need help to improve their health. The most important thing about this program is that it gives people access to restaurants with healthy food.

ROBERT SONDAK is a Spare Change News vendor and writer. Robert has a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Massachusetts Boston, College of Public and Community Service (CPCS). Robert also minored in Urban Planning and Advocacy. Currently Robert is the Executive Director of the Nutrition Education Outreach Project, www.neo-neopt.blogspot.com.

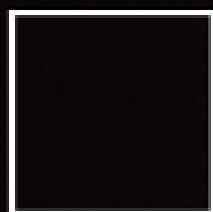


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International
Network of
Street
Papers



Food

DAILY MEALS:

Bread & Jams Self Advocacy Center
Serves adults only, no children.
50 Quincy St. Cambridge, MA 02138 Ph. 617-441-3831
Located in the basement of the Swedenborg Church at the corner of Kirkland and Quincy. Breakfast 9:30am to 10am; lunch at 12 noon. Other services include case management, housing assistance, clinical assessment, and referrals for substance abuse and medical treatment.

Boston Rescue Mission 39 Kingston St., Boston
Community meals: 3pm weekdays, and 5pm Sundays.

Pine Street Inn 444 Harrison Ave., Boston, 617-482-4944
Breakfast: 6 a.m.; brown bag lunches during the day;
Dinner: 5 p.m.; Chicken truck: 11:30 a.m.

Rosie's Place Women & children only, no boys over age 11
889 Harrison Ave., Boston, 617-442-9322
Lunch: 11:30 a.m. ñ 1 p.m.; Dinner: 4:30 p.m. -- 7 p.m.

St. Francis House 39 Boylston St., Boston, 617-542-4211
Breakfast: 7:30 a.m. ñ 9 a.m.; Lunch: 11:30 a.m. ñ 1 p.m.
Emergency sandwiches: Weekdays 2:45 p.m. ñ 3 p.m.

Salvation Army 402 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, 617-547-3400
Lunch: 12 p.m.

Women's Lunch Place Women & children only, no boys over age 14, male presence discouraged
67 Newbury St., Boston., 617-267-0200
Open Mon. ñ Fri, 8 a.m. -- 2p.m.
Until September, they will be at the Old South Church at 645 Boylston St. • www.womenslunchplace.org

WEEKLY MEALS
Monday:
Boston Rescue Mission 39 Kingston St., Boston
Food pantry: 9-11am (except holidays). Bring proof of address.
(Church of the Holy Resurrection) new name and address
Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church 62 Harvard Ave., Allston, 617-787-7625
Mondays open door
6 p.m. ñ 7 p.m. and take-out.
Also, food pantry on Monday -- if needed on other days, contact the church.

Mass. Ave. Baptist Church
146 Hampshire St., Cambridge, 617-868-4853.
6 p.m. ñ 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday:
Church of the Advent
30 Brimmer St., Boston, 617-523-2377 6 p.m. to 7pm
First Parish Unitarian Church
3 Church St., Cambridge, 617-876-7772
6 p.m. ñ 7 p.m. (doors open at 5:30 p.m.)

Faith Kitchen, Faith Lutheran Church
311 Broadway, Cambridge, 617-354-0414
6:30 p.m. (second & last Tuesday of every month)

Wednesday:
Hope Fellowship Church
16 Beech Street, Cambridge, MA 02140
Streelight Outreach Team - Wednesday nights at Harvard Square in the pit 8:15pm to 9:45pm
Providing fellowship, food, basic clothing needs and of course, prayer.

Hope Cafe
Every last Saturday of the month (usually)
Upcoming dates: July 30th, August 20th, and September 24th

Hope Fellowship Church
12pm to 1:30pm
Providing a free community meal and clothing center
Weekly Sunday Service
Times: 9am, 11am, 6pm
We strive to be a welcoming community, providing Gospel centered teaching, praise and worship.

Salvation Army 402 Mass. Ave., Cambridge
617-547-3400 5 p.m. ñ 6 p.m.

Thursday:
Christ Church Zero Garden St. Cambridge
617-876-0200 6 p.m.

St. James Church
1991 Mass. Ave, Cambridge
The Women's Meal: Temporarily relocated at Hope Fellowship Church at the corner of Beech and Orchard St.

Cambridge, with the basement entrance on Orchard St.
(Women and children welcome)
4 p.m.-6:30 p.m.

The Women's Meal (Women and children welcome)
5 p.m. -- 7 p.m. (food pantry 3 days/week)

Union Baptist Church
874 Main St., Cambridge, 617-864-6885 5 p.m.

Friday:
Arlington St. Church
351 Boylston St., Boston, 617-536-7050 5 p.m.

Food Not Bombs
Boston Common (near Park St. T station), 617-522-8277
3 p.m. -- 5 p.m.

Mass. Ave. Baptist Church
146 Hampshire St., Cambridge, 617-868-4853
6 p.m. -- 7:30 p.m.

Saturday:
Pilgrim Church
540 Columbia Rd, Dorchester
Approx 8:45 (Boston Commons, near fountain)
We serve soup, pasta, coffee, juice, pastries, sandwiches, and clothing once a month.
12-1:30 pm
We offer a free community lunch, cafe style, and we serve the guests, no standing in line. The meals are hot and made with love by our very talented chef.

Sunday:
Food Not Bombs
955 Mass Ave (617) 787-3436
Central Square in Cambridge on Sundays from 3-5pm.

FOOD ASSISTANCE
Greater Boston Food Bank, 617-427-5200
Serves non-profit organizations such as agencies, shelters, etc. Office hours: 8 a.m. -- 4:30 p.m.

Project Bread i 617-723-5000; Hotline 1-800-645-8333
Referrals to food pantries throughout the city

Somerville Food Pantry i 617-776-7687
Food pantry: Mon, Tue, Fri 10 a.m. -- 2 p.m.; Wed 12 p.m. -- 4 p.m.; Thu 1 p.m. -- 4 p.m.
Somerville residents only. Those unable to use other pantries due to disability may call and ask for the Project Soup Delivery Coordinator.

Brookline Food Pantry
15 St. Paul St., Brookline, 617-566-4953
Tues. & Thurs. 10 a.m. -- 2 p.m., Sat. 2 p.m. -- 4 p.m.
Brookline residents only. Second-time visitors must present a letter from an advocate confirming that they are in need of food services.

CEOC (Cambridge Economic Opportunity Commission)
11 Inman St. (basement), Cambridge, 617-868-2900
Food pantry: Mon, Wed 4 p.m. -- 6 p.m.; Tue 12 p.m. -- 2 p.m.; Thu 11 a.m. -- 1 p.m.; Closed Fri.

East End House
105 Spring St., Cambridge, 617-876-4444
Food pantry: Tue 9 a.m. -- 2 p.m.; Fri 9 a.m. -- 12 p.m.
Offers assistance in filling out food stamp applications (call for appointment).

Margaret Fuller Houses
71 Cherry St., Cambridge, 617-547-4680
Food pantry: Wed. 5 p.m. -- 7 p.m.; Thurs. 9 a.m. -- 12 p.m. & 6 p.m. -- 7:30 p.m.; Fri & Sat 9 a.m. -- 12 p.m.
Pentecostal Tabernacle Church i 617-661-0222
Food pantry by appointment only; no deliveries or walk-ins; referrals to other food pantries

Salvation Army
402 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, 617-547-3400
Cambridge and Somerville residents only.
Food pantry: 9 a.m. -- 3 p.m. & by appointment

St. Francis House
39 Boylston St., Boston, 617-542-4211
Food pantry: Mon. ñ Fri. 10 a.m. -- 11 a.m.
Sign up at the Counseling Desk in the St. Francis House Day Center

St. James Church
1191 Mass. Ave, Cambridge
Food Pantry: Temporarily relocated at Fresh Pond Apartments, off of Rindge, Cambridge
Tues. 6 p.m.- 8 p.m.; Thurs. 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Sat. 10 a.m.- 12 p.m.
St. Paul's Ame Church
85 Bishop Allen Drive, Cambridge, 617-661-1110
Food pantry: Wed. 12p.m.--2 p.m.; Sat. 10a.m.--12 p.m.

Western Ave. Baptist Church
299 Western Ave.,Cambridge, 617-661-0433
Food pantry: Every second Wed., 10 a.m.
Zinberg Clinic Pantry at Cambridge Hospital 617-665-1606
For clinic patients with HIV / AIDS only.
Food pantry: Mon. -- Fri. 9 a.m. -- 5 p.m.
Fair Foods \$2 a bag;
CAMBRIDGE, St. Paul's Church 29 Mt. Auburn St
Harvard Sq. Red Line
Saturdays 10-11

SOMERVILLE, Cobble Hill Apts
84 Washington St. Back parking lot (near Sullivan Sq.)
Every other Wed. 11:30-1

Mt. Pleasant Apts. 70 Perkins St. (off Broadway)
Every other Wed. 1:30 - 2:30
Hearty meals for all

Somerville Community Baptist Church
31 College Ave. Somerville, MA 02144
Free community meals the second Friday of every month at 6:30pm

Homeless Concerns

The Women's Center
46 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 617-354-8807
Computers, kitchen, space, children's room, and more.
Walk-ins welcome.
Women & children only (no boys over age 12)
Hours: Mon-Fri 10am-8pm, Sat 10am-3pm.

Cambridge Multi-Service Center
19 Brookline St., Cambridge, 617-349-6340
City-run agency with additional community non-profit partners. Works with Cambridge families in shelters, provides shelter referrals and other housing assistance. Employs housing specialists for elderly and disabled.
Office hours: Mon. 8:30 a.m. -- 8 p.m.; Tue., Wed., Thu. 8:30 a.m. -- 5 p.m.; Fri. 8:30 a.m. -- 12 p.m. Walk-ins accepted.

Cardinal Medeiros Center
25 Isabella St., Boston, 617-619-6960
Day center for homeless adults (50 years & older); mental health & nursing staff; help with housing searches.
Lunch served at 11:45 a.m.
Office hours: Mon.-Thu. 9a.m.- 4p.m.; Fri. 9a.m.-3 p.m.

Caspar 240 Albany St., Cambridge, 617-661-0600
Open 24 hrs / day; emergency shelter open 4:30 p.m. -- 8 a.m.; Clients who leave in the morning may not return until 3 p.m.; Clients staying multiple nights must prove recent local residency.

CLASP (Community Legal Assistance Services Project)
19 Brookline St., Cambridge, 617-552-0623
Free legal clinic for Cambridge homeless at the Multi-Service Center every Tuesday at 8:30 a.m.

Ecclesia Ministries 67 Newbury Street, Boston., 617-552-0623

Weekly Schedule for the Common Cathedral:
Sunday: Worship at Brewer's Fountain on Boston Common, 1 pm
- Gospel Reflection at St. Paul's Cathedral, 138 Tremont St., 2:30 p.m. -- 4 p.m.
Monday: Lunch at Sproat Hall (St. Paul's Cathedral) 11:30 a.m. --1 p.m.
-Eucharist & Healing (St. Paul's Cathedral) 1 p.m.
- Common Fellowship in Sproat Hall (St. Paul's Cathedral) 2 p.m. --3 p.m.
Wednesday: Common Art at the Emmanuel Church, 15 Newbury Street, 10 a.m. -- 3 p.m.
Friday: Common Cinema in Sproat Hall (St. Paul's Cathedral) 2:30 p.m. -- 5 p.m.

Horizons for Homeless Children
617-445-1480; www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org
Horizons for Homeless Children is seeking volunteers to interact and play with children living in family, teen parent, and domestic violence shelters in Greater Boston. We offer daytime and evening shifts, so there is likely to be one that fits your schedule. A commitment of 2 hours a week for 6 months is required. The next training session will be Sat., Sept. 27, 9:30 a.m. -- 4:30 p.m.

Medical Walk-in Unit at Mass General Hospital

617-726-2707
Provides minor medical care for adults. Patients are seen in order of arrival. MGH accepts most insurances but requires copayments.
Hours: Mon.-Fri. 8:30 a.m.-8 p.m.; Sat., Sun., Holidays 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.; closed Thanksgiving & Christmas

Boston Rescue Mission 39 Kingston St., Boston
Safe & healthy men's overnight shelter program.

Rosie's Place 889 Harrison Ave., Boston, 617-442-9322
Women and children only (no boys over age 11)
Open 7 days a week; provides help with housing, medical care, job training, financial aid and education, legal services, rape crisis counselors, health specialists, and more.

St. Francis House 39 Boylston Street, Boston, 617-542-4211
Meals offered 365 days/yr.; food pantry open weekdays.
Offers a mailroom, open art studio, clothing lottery, computer library, support groups such as AA, showers, telephones, toothbrushes & razors, medical clinic, counseling and mental health services, housing counseling and stabilization services, and a women's center. For more details on these services and for their specific times visit www.stfrancishouse.org

Starlight Ministries 617-262-4567
Outreach van with food, clothing, blankets and worship.
Hours: Wed. 8 p.m. by Park Street T station on the Boston Common.

Streelight Outreach Wednesdays at 8:00 PM
Harvard T-Station (The Pit); Porter Square T-Station.
Volunteers work weekly to serve the homeless who live in Harvard and Porter Squares. Volunteer teams give away warm food and beverages, clothing and counsel to those in need. Streelight volunteers also lead an outdoor worship service for the entire community.

The Women's Center
46 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 617-354-8807
Computers, kitchen and rooms. Walk-ins welcome.
Women & children only (no boys over age 16).
Hours: Mon-Fri 10 a.m.-- 8 p.m., Sat 10 a.m. -- 3 p.m.

On The Rise 341 Broadway, Cambridge, 617-497-7968
Women only. Home-base during the day and advocacy services. Open six days/ week. First-time visitors, call ahead or stop by Mon-Sat, 8-2pm.

The Outdoor Church of Cambridge
The Outdoor Church of Cambridge is an outdoor ministry to homeless men and women in Cambridge. Prayer services and pastoral assistance outdoors in all seasons and all weather. Short prayer services in Porter Square, under the mobile sculpture near the T station, at 9:00 a.m. and on the Cambridge Common, near the tall Civil War monument and directly across from Christ Church Cambridge on Garden Street, at 1:00 p.m. every Sunday, throughout the year. Sandwiches, pastry, juice and clean white socks available in Harvard Square and Central Square. (978)456-0047, 39 Brown Road, Harvard, Massachusetts 01451 jedman-nis@charter.net; www.theoutdoorchurch.net.

Victory Programs, Inc.
www.vpi.org. Short and long-term residential substance use disorder treatment programs for individuals and families; affordable housing opportunities for eligible individuals; HIV / AIDS case management. Sites throughout Boston
Please call for more information. (617) 541-0222 ext. 626

Legal Aid:
Lawyers Clearinghouse, 617-723-0885
Shelter Legal Services (Newton), 617-965-0449

The Homeless Eyecare Network of Boston (HEN-Boston)
is a nonprofit organization dedicated to maintaining a constantly undated network of affordable and free eyecare services for the homeless. If you need an eye exam or glasses, please visit our website, www.hen-boston.org.

Artist's Paintings Find a Home



PHOTO / NICK PARKAS/BUNKER HILL CC BY DEPARTMENT

Alexander Moore
Spare Change News

When we last saw Marc Clamage, Spare Change News' Adam Sennott found him painting portraits of the homeless in Harvard Square. With eight paintings under his belt, Marc sought out a gallery to house his creations. At the Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) Art Gallery, Marc Clamage found the ideal place to display his series, "The Panhandlers of Harvard Square". Through Laura Montgomery, the director of the Art Gallery and adjunct professor at BHCC, Marc was able to display his paintings to the world. Free and open to the public, the exhibit "Can You Spare A Dime?" had a reception on Wednesday, October 20, 2011 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. which Clamage himself attended. It came complete with shopping carts, milk crates and even live music by Yani Batteau & the Styles.

Marc Clamage seemed excited when he spoke. He complimented Laura Montgomery highly, hinting that without her this exhibit may not have happened. He placed an advertisement on Craigslist.com, hoping to get a bite. This is where he had his first contact with Laura. Laura connected him with Adam Sennott and that became what was the previous article about the artist, Marc Clamage. As we spoke at the reception, he described how each subject had his or her own story. He told stories of how he, when painting one model, baked in the sun for at least an hour. Then another model had the police called on him by a man, only to have the same man give him money afterward. After telling me these riveting tales, he agreed with the idea that you couldn't help become connected with the homeless after a project like this.

"They were very generous to each other and everyone was very generous to them," he said. He seemed pleased with his paintings at the gallery; moreover, his overall tone during our conversation seemed to come from a man who knew that he had succeeded.

Professor Montgomery said she discovered Clamage while "trawling" Craigslist.com during the summer. She decided to show

Marc's work at the gallery because she felt it was a topic that desperately needed attention, especially from the students.

"The students are the main constituents when it comes to determining what is displayed," she stated. This is clearly evident in the information available at the event and the general set-up of the exhibition. Students can get educated on the increasingly prevalent and extremely significant issues of poverty and homelessness as they browse the informational table about social service agencies for community service and volunteer work. According to Laura, the paintings bring to light not only those people who were painted. She says, "For every obvious homeless person, like the ones in the portraits of panhandlers, there are hundreds of homeless that are invisible."

"Considering our current economic times," Professor Montgomery continued, "the great amount of people now turned out into the streets due to joblessness, evictions, and foreclosures, and the lack of resources to address the needs of our growing population of poor and homeless, bringing artwork like this to the BHCC gallery and our students is timely."

A light has been shone on the subjects of the paintings and on homelessness as a whole, through the work of Marc Clamage, Laura Montgomery, the staff at the Art Gallery, Bunker Hill Community College and everyone else involved. The city of Boston can now see a different side to this ever-prevalent problem—and perhaps solve it. As you walk through the exhibit you can feel the energy radiating from the canvases; these people are immortalized in the paintings, and, for now, they have a home.

The Bunker Hill Community College Art Gallery is holding the exhibit until November 13, 2011 at the Charlestown Campus in the A Building.

Live link:

www.bhcc.mass.edu/inside/493

ALEXANDER MOORE is a writer and English major at Bunker Hill Community College.

